

CLEAN VERSION OF AMENDED CLAIMS

1. (Previously Presented) A method of fulfilling an information need comprising:

receiving a query comprised of one or more fully specified terms and one or more at least partially unspecified terms pertaining to the information need wherein the at least partially unspecified terms are separate from the one or more fully specified terms in the query and the at least partially unspecified terms include a predefined character sequence representing a matching restriction that defines at least one of: a syntactical criteria, a morphological criteria, and a criteria defined in accordance with a determination by a computer program; and

determining one or more matches for the query, wherein a criterion for determining one of said matches specifies that (i) a relative order of at least one term of said query need not be preserved with respect to at least one other term included in said query, and (ii) said one or more matches for the query are determined in accordance with said matching restriction.

2. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

identifying documents in an index that contain the one or more at least partially unspecified terms, the index including preanalyzed contexts of terms appearing within a plurality of documents.

3. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the method further comprises:

identifying contexts within an index that in accordance with the query, the index including preanalyzed contexts of terms appearing within a plurality of documents;
converting the query into a finite state machine; and
matching the finite state machine against the identified contexts.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the finite state machine is a finite state transducer.

5. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the finite state machine allows for the appearance of fully specified and at least partially unspecified terms in any order in a potential matching context.

6. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the finite state machine allows for one or more intervening words between the fully specified and at least partially unspecified terms in a potential matching context.

7. - 15. (Canceled)

16. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein the contexts are stored as finite state machines.

17. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein the documents are accessible

over the Internet.

18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 3, wherein the documents comprise World Wide Web Pages.

19. (Canceled)

20. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:
assigning a score to a match.

21. (Currently amended) The method of claim 20, wherein the score reflects the number of times an instance of the match is located among a plurality of documents.

22. -24. (Canceled)

25. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 20, further comprising:
ranking the documents that contain a match based on a number of times the match is located within a document.

26. (Canceled)

27. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said one or more partially unspecified terms includes a syntactic or a morphological restriction.

28. -33. (Canceled)

34. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 2, wherein the index comprises locations of terms within documents.

35. (Previously presented) The method of claim 34, further comprising:

determining the location of a term in the query within a document using the index; and

locating a match for the query based on the location of the term within the document.

36. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

ranking a plurality of the located matches or portions thereof.

37. - 38. (Canceled)

39. (Original) The method of claim 36, wherein the ranking is based on one or more features selected from the list consisting of: the location of a match within a document, a weight assigned to a document that contains a match, the age of a document that

contains a match, the source of a document that contains a match, and a format feature of a match within a document.

40. - 63. (Canceled)

64. (Previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said query includes a delimiter indicating a first portion of said query for which a relative order is preserved for one or more terms included in said first portion, said relative order being in accordance with a physical position of each term in said first portion with respect to any other terms in said first portion.

65. Please cancel claim 65.

66. (Previously Presented) A computer readable medium storing a computer program product for fulfilling an information need, the computer readable medium comprising:

computer program code for receiving a query comprised of one or more fully specified terms and one or more at least partially unspecified terms wherein the at least partially unspecified terms are separate from the one or more fully specified terms in the query, and said at least partially unspecified terms include a predefined character sequence representing a matching restriction that defines at least one of: a syntactical criteria, a morphological criteria, and a criteria defined in accordance with a determination by a computer program; and

computer program code for determining one or more matches for the query in accordance with said matching restriction, wherein a relative order of at least one term of said query need not be preserved with respect to at least one other term included in said query.

67. (Previously Presented) The computer readable medium of claim 66, wherein said query includes a delimiter indicating a first portion of said query for which a relative order is preserved for one or more terms included in said first portion, said relative order being in accordance with a physical position of each term in said first portion with respect to any other terms in said first portion.

68. Please cancel claim 68.

69. (New) The method of claim 1 that wherein the matching restriction includes a morphological criteria.

70. (New) The method of claim 69 that wherein the morphological criteria includes one of a noun, verbal noun, adjective, conjunction, pronoun, adverb, verb, transitive verb, intransitive verb, verb in past tense, verb in present tense, verb in future intense, present participle of a verb, past participle of a verb, and gerund.

71. (New) The method of claim 1 that wherein the matching restriction includes a syntactical criteria.

72. (New) The method of claim 71 that wherein the syntactical criteria includes one of a noun phrase, verb phrase, prepositional phrase, adverbial phrase, and adjectival phrase.

73. (New) The method of claim 1 that wherein the matching restriction includes a definable category.

74. (New) The method of claim 1 wherein the matching restriction includes a criteria defined in accordance with a determination by a computer program.